

MINI NEWS

Mini Owners of America - Los Angeles

Greetings, fellow sufferers! No, I'm not going to say a word about the jackets; what can I say that hasn't already been said several times? Except that they are apparently now available... if you're interested, check 'em out at the next meeting, Wednesday, Nov. 16, 7:30 PM, at Fullerton Savings & Loan, 12860 Euclid (at Acacia) in Garden Grove.

But the weekend before that comes another MOA-LA tradition: the Topanga Turkey Tour. The name is vaguely appropriate -- it *is* held in the general area of Topanga Canyon; it *is* held in the same month as Thanksgiving; and it *is* a tour in our sense of drive, eat, drive. More particularly, we set out along the Coast Highway past Malibu, turning inland to sample the rural canyon roads before stopping at the Rock Store for Biker Burgers; then we head for home as quickly as possible before the burgers kick in. How can you resist? You can't; so meet on the street alongside the Holiday Inn at Sunset Blvd and the San Diego freeway at 9:00 AM on Sunday, Nov. 13.

A little club business: The end of the year means it's time to think about electing leadership for 1989. Hey, look at it this way -- even if you're soured on the whole political process by now, here's a case in which your vote really counts. In fact, you can even stand for office if you like; show 'em how things ought to be run. At present we really only have one elected officer, sort of a President-and-garbage-collector, because other members have informally taken on the secretarial and financial tasks; but there's no reason we can't field a full board. All it takes is you.

Another way you can help the club is by bringing in new members. We all know by now how much more fun it is to go on a run with six or eight or ten Minis (if you don't, you've never been on one); and the more people who participate, the better the club is for all of us. So if you run across an unfamiliar face out there in a Mini, drag it along to the next meeting or event.

The end of the year means one other thing: the Christmas/Hanukah/who-needs-an-excuse party. The date and place haven't been established yet (there are already a couple of volunteers), so watch your mail for an update. And remember: no monthly meeting in December!

As you will see elsewhere in this issue, Sir Alec Issigonis died recently. A modern Henry Ford, he had strongly held opinions and ideas, several of which (as we know) took on lives of their own. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.*

You may know bits and pieces of Sir Alec's history. For a more complete view of his professional contributions, you can read The Designers by L.J.K. Setright, which looks at some of the most creative minds in the story of the automobile (Ettore Bugatti, Henry Royce, Henry Leyland, etc). There is also now a biography of Issigonis; see the review inserted elsewhere in this issue. (I took it from the Central Ohio Mini Owners' razz-letter; no mention of whence they got it.)

An interesting question. I have always heard "Issigonis" pronounced with the accent on the third syllable. However, on a recent radio program a fellow who might be presumed to know about such matters put the emphasis on the second syllable. Anybody know the facts here?

Past perfect

Del Mar... Ah, yes, that was a long time ago... way back in October. I'll let Bob Amaral have the floor on that one.

Thought I would write up a short report on this event for those of you who could not make it. Also to give Dean Deeds a little copy to fill the monthly newsletter.

The turnout for Minis was dissappointing - to say the least - but it was a good day overall (for the meet itself). The day started for me with a very brisk drive down to Carls Jr. at Lake Forest - **I ALMOST FROZE!**

Remembering last year's sweltering heat I wore a minimum of clothing - shorts and a tee-shirt. That was a real mistake!! The early-morning drive was replete with fog and very low temperatures - but no traffic!

Arriving at Carls I saw Curt's white Austin America in the parking lot. That was it folks - no other Minis!! Oh, well- I was early - I assured myself. Inside the restaurant was Curt (eating one of Carl's complete gourmet breakfasts) and Mark Smith. I hadn't noticed Mark's MG outside - after all - I was looking for a horde of Minis.

The three of us exchanged thoughts on just how late everyone would be - assuring ourselves that *"They will be along."* This went on for 20 minutes or so - by that time the conversation degenerated into - *"Is there really going to be a meet??"* or *"Where did you see an official announcement?"* Oh well - by 8:30 we decided that we were the caravan and hit the freeway.

The drive seemed so short last year (with 6 or so cars) and much longer this time. We saw **NO OTHER ENGLISH CARS** on the way - (right up to the entrance). The signs at the entrance read **"Psychic Fair Today"** and **"Gun Show Today"** - The words **"UH OH"** occurred to me. But - Lo and Behold - venturing further into the track we spotted a lady with a card table - a sure sign that **THE SHOW WAS ON!!** (*Still no sign*) - But the show was on.

The weather improved around 11:00 am - the fog burned off and someone switched on the sun. Lots and Lots of MG's this year. A few more Morgans and Triumphs than last year. The usual number of Sprites and maybe a few more Austin Healeys. Some new cars (to me anyway) and some regulars that I remember from last year. Joe was there with his clubman - still pulling the trailer. One new Mini - painted Friday - assembled Saturday and driven to the meet Sunday (it was a '67 Canadian car - blue body/white top) - a nice looking car.

All told about 8 Minis showed - not counting a real nice Riley Elf convertible. The usual storytelling and gawking at cars went on. One Triumph owner had his storys backed up with pictures and maps and even a swatch of the old convertible top with bear-claw marks on it. Attacked by a Grizzly - (It might have been the best story of the day).

Anyway - it was a real good day - The Pentathlon was fun to watch (we did not field a team for the Minis) - and the overall winner of a crystal bowl for **"Peoples Choice - Best Car"** went to an incredible 1936 MG restoration. The car was immaculate and was driven to the meet.

OK - so this short report turned into an encyclopaedia!! I'll quit soon. **BUT FURST** - - **"Best of Marque"** in the Mini category was taken by a passenger-less, lonely little fellow - who went about the meet looking for sympathy votes and offering quick tours of his car with long and boring explanations of how it became so beautiful. In case you still don't know who that might be - **ITS ME! ME! ME!**

So - you guys with the real hot vote-getters - *Thanks for not showing up!*

Bob Amaral

And the following week was the British Car field meet at Woodley Park in Van Nuys. Hot? Lemme tell ya. Margaret said the newspaper headlines would read 300 BRITISH CARS OVERHEAT IN VAN NUYS. There was a much larger turnout of Minis than for Del Mar; some from MDA-LA, some from MDA-SD, some Valley folk, and so on. Lots of other marques too. After attending several of these things you tend to skip past the common stuff -- most of the MGs, Sprites, Triumphs, even the later Morgans -- and head for the unusual (old or uncommon) items; and there were enough of those to occupy the eye for a few hours on a lazy Sunday.

That's all for now. See you soon!

Dean Deeds



1953 MG Airline coupe, in dark and pale green, appeared at Del Mar and Woodley Park.

MINIS ON THE GRASS, ALAS...



HOW I SPENT MY VACATION

by Bill Gilcrease
as told to MiniNews

We'll skip over the picture of driving to Atlanta in a motorhome, towing an enclosed racecar trailer. I'm sure the reader can fill in the pleasant details. Let's cut to the track. On the first day of practice I was assaulted by a GT-4 Datsun which decided to use my Mini as a launching pad. The Datsun's sill left marks above window level along the right side of my car; my fender flares and front end were pretty thoroughly trashed by the encounter, though the tube frame came through almost unbent. (I later found that my own personal tube frame suffered some cracked ribs. It only hurts when I laugh. Ruefully.)

Patching up the Mini in the best racing tradition with 200-mph tape, I proceeded out to the next session, wherein my cylinder head sprang a leak -- make that "became one big leak" -- resulting in water lock in one cylinder, damaged rod, spun bearing.

The faithful crew and I installed the spare engine, built to the same spec (except for bearings). This cylinder head also developed incontinence, resulting in a trapped piston (cold spray on hot aluminum...). I now had two broken power units. We managed (skipping over the clearance problems) to assemble one running engine out of them, using a years-old spare head. This engine would run, but was way down on power -- it wouldn't pull over 6500 rpm. [Editor's note: I think I've forgotten some trivial mishap or other, because Bill actually raced on a fourth cylinder head. After a while the details all run together.]

With all this excitement, I got in scarcely any qualifying. Gridded at something like 27th, I worked up as high as 8th and finished about 10th with a car that handled perfectly but couldn't keep up with the race pace.

Next year? Maybe. But first we're going to have a word with the builder of those heads...

PASSINGS

Los Angeles Times 10/06/87

■ Alec Issigonis; Designed the Mini Automobile

Alec Issigonis, 81, designer of the box-like Mini car that brought economical motoring to millions of Britons. Issigonis joined Morris Motors in 1936 and built a lightweight, hill-climb car to demonstrate the potential of all-independent suspension. His first complete production car was the Morris Minor. After working at Alvis in the early 1950s, Issigonis returned to what had become British Motor Car Corp. to design and produce a small, economical car—the Mini. The result was radical for the time—a transverse engine powering the front wheels. More than 5 million Minis, planned as "a box on wheels," have been built since they were introduced in 1959, setting a new standard for small-car design. He was knighted in 1969. In London on Sunday.

WANT ADS

FOR SALE: 1979 Austin Mini Cooper 1000. Approx 45K miles; looks and runs great. Asking \$5800. Taryn Cowley,
or (message)

FOR SALE: 1967 Austin Mini, RHD, Cosmics, flares, complete less engine/trans, \$1200. Bruce, (days),
(evenings)

WANTED: Austin America/1300, engine or entire car, suitable for rebuilding. Engine should be sound; condition of car is irrelevant. Dean Deeds, 150²³

FOR SALE: Pair of Australian doors (rollup and vent windows, but with external hinges to fit Mk I/II body -- see figure), \$425. Curt, 1979 701 1077



1979 Austin-1000, Canadian, smogged, x1nt condition, stock w/ factory roofrack, 21000 km Mike Foote

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unreaded



Alec Issigonis

by Andrew Nahum, published
by The Design Council, 28
Haymarket, London SW1Y
ASU. Price £8.95.

As one of the British motor industry's outstanding personalities of the post-war years, Sir Alec Issigonis has received remarkably little biographical attention since his effective retirement in 1971.

Now the balance has been redressed to some extent by Andrew Nahum's all too brief but fascinating study. Although only 90 pages long, the author packs in plenty of information and has had the good sense to talk to some of 'Issy's' friends

and associates, such as Alex Moulton and Jack Daniels, so much of this book is based on first hand recollections.

A lot of the story is familiar however. Issigonis' career at Humber and Morris, and his work on the Minor and the Mini, are faithfully chronicled.

But here Mr Nahum gives us only part of the story, skimming over the drastic underpricing of the Mini which played a part in BMC's tumble into deficit and its takeover by Leyland. This is dismissed in a couple of paragraphs and stories of Ford's devastatingly detailed costing of the Mini considered possibly 'apocryphal' which is far from the case. Issigonis' tenure as BMC's technical director from 1961 was less happy and the slow selling 1800, ghastly 3-litre and gutless Maxi which were designed under his aegis do not quite square with his later claim that "I thought I knew better than the market research people what the public wants — as is shown by the results."

Highly recommended, this study is complemented by many excellent and hitherto unpublished photographs. JW

